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Two public information sessions will be held today regarding the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's plans to address lead contamination at the Matteo's Iron and Metals property. The sessions are 3 to 5 p.m. and 7 to 9 p.m. in the municipal courtroom, 400 Crown Point Road.

## EPA investigates West Deptford pollution

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### WEST DEPTFORD

For the past two years, Chris Williams and her two teenage daughters played football, baseball and tossed discs to each other in an open field adjacent to the Willow Woods Mobile Home Park where they live.

"We didn't know it was contaminated," Williams said Wednesday as she walked her dog in the mobile home park.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has advised Williams to have her daughters tested for lead contamination after preliminary soil samples last April and again in February showed elevated levels of pollutants that are cause for concern.

Officials have proposed erecting a chain-link fence to keep people away from small areas on the Matteo Iron and Metals property on Crown Point Road, south of Exit 22 on Interstate 295. Ben Barry, an EPA spokesman, said an investigation is under way to determine the extent of contamination and whether ground-water has been tainted.

"You have to know what you're dealing with before you can clean it up properly," Barry said.

Two EPA officials will answer questions and explain their containment efforts during two public sessions today at the municipal building here. Township Administrator Gerald White plans to attend and push for the site's cleanup since lead contamination is a health hazard.

The majority of residents in the 170-unit mobile home park are senior citizens, but a number of families with children also live there. Older teens frequently hang out at the site to party and drink, residents said.

Williams said an EPA administrator promised to reimburse her for the cost of medical tests to determine long-term health risks to her daughters. She is worried that lead exposure could cause health problems for her daughters' children, if they were to give birth.

Ronald Douglas, 58, scoffed at the idea of putting up a fence because it would do little to prevent pollution from migrating with water runoff from heavy rains or melting snow.

He worried that publicity about contamination would cause property values to plummet and make it more difficult for mobile home residents to relocate.

"If you wanted to sell your trailer, who the hell wants it? Who's going to put their family and children in jeopardy?" Douglas asked.

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